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ABSTRACT

A report that describes some of the characteristics of Harford Community College students is summarized. The 12 variables investigated in order to develop a description of the student population and pinpoint trends were: (1) part-time students--the proportion of part-time students was found to be rising dramatically; (2) Age--the average age of the students was rising significantly; (3) Sex--the proportion of women had increased greatly, especially among part-time students; (4) Marital status--the proportion of single persons had dropped significantly; (5) Ethnic background--the racial mixture had not changed significantly during three years; (6) Residence--more students were coming from Harford County, and mostly from five areas in the county; (7) Employment--nearly one-third of the students were unemployed, but nearly one-half worked 40 hours or more per week; (8) Financial aid--the proportion of students with veteran's benefits increased 12 percent; (9) Curriculum--the proportion of students in general studies doubled in four years; (10) Credit load--there was a significant reduction in the average course load; (11) Grades--the average Quality Point Index increased slightly during the past six years; and (12) Noncredit enrollment--the number of students enrolled in noncredit courses increased seven times faster than enrollment in credit courses during the past eight years. (Author/DB)

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Research Report 74-3

A PICTURE OF CHANGE: CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS OF HARFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

This is a summary of a report that describes some of the characteristics of Harford Community College Students. The study was done for the Long Range Planning Task Force, in order to provide a foundation of data about who constitute the students at the College. Twelve variables were investigated in order to develop the description. The report covers full and part-time credit students. Except for enrollment, comparable information is not readily available for noncredit students.

1. Part-time students: the proportion of part-time students is rising dramatically.

   In 1968, 42 percent of our students were part-time. By the fall of 1973, this figure had risen to 61 percent. This is part of a national trend; between 1969 and 1972, the number of part-time students nationwide rose 2.3 times faster than full-time students. However at Harford, part-time enrollment rose 7.3 times faster during the same period.

2. Age: the average age of our students is rising significantly.

   In 1968, only 19 percent of our students were 26 or older. In the Fall of 1973, this proportion had more than doubled, with 39 percent being 26 or older. These differences in the age of our students are statistically significant; there is less than one possibility in 1000 that these changes are due to chance. The growth of the College among part-time students has assisted in this upward motion. Among full-time students, three-fourths are 20 or below, while among part-time students, three-fourths are 21 or above.

3. Sex: the proportion of women has increased greatly, especially among part-timers.

   In 1968, 17 percent of our students were women who were attending part-time. By 1973, this had nearly doubled, to 32 percent. This increase was accompanied by a drop in the proportion of men attending on a full-time basis. The proportion of men attending part-time and women attending full-time has remained fairly constant.

4. Marital status: the proportion of single persons has fallen significantly.

   Single persons constituted 69 percent of the students in 1968. In 1973, only 52 percent of our students were single. While the major increase was among married students, there were increases in persons who are divorced, separated, and widowed. These differences in marital status are statistically significant. There is less than one possibility in 1000 that the changes are due to chance. The changes in patterns of marital status among students were most pronounced between 1968 and 1970.

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5. Ethnic background: the mixture of races has not changed significantly in the last three years.

During the past two years, the proportion of black students has increased from 6.8 to 7.9 percent of the student population. This change is not statistically significant. There is a real possibility that the difference in racial mix occurred because of chance variations in enrollment. Black persons constituted 8.4 percent of the population of Harford County in 1970. The proportion of black students at Harford is rising more slowly than at other Maryland community colleges. During one year, the average community college in Maryland increased its proportion of black students 1.3 percent, compared with a 1.2 percent gain at Harford over two years.

6. Residence: more students are coming from Harford County, and they come mostly from five areas in the County.

The past five years have seen an increase of 10.5 percent in the proportion of students coming from Harford County, from 83.9 percent in 1968 to 94.4 percent in 1973. This is much higher than the average community college in Maryland, which enrolls 88.2 percent of its students from its home county. Within Harford County, students tend to come from Bel Air and the "I-95 Corridor." Nearly three-fourths of all credit students come from five communities: Bel Air, Havre de Grace, Aberdeen, Edgewood, and Joppa.

7. Employment: nearly one-third of our students are unemployed, but nearly one-half work 40 hours or more per week.

Extent of employment among part-time students has been fairly stable during the past five years. While 60 percent of part-time students work 40 or more hours per week, one-fourth of part-time students are not employed at all. Among full-time students, there is a tendency in the last few years toward more hours spent working. There also seems to be a seasonal variation in that full-time students take on greater work loads during the fall semesters.

8. Financial aid: the proportion of students with veteran's benefits increased 12 percent.

There has been a strong increase in the proportion of students receiving veteran's assistance over the past five years. This has been accompanied by a drop in the proportion of students receiving Social Security benefits through their parents. Part-time and full-time students get financial aid from quite different places. Reimbursement from employer is predominant among part-time students. Scholarships, students loans, and work-study are much more common to full-time students.

9. Curriculum: the proportion of students in General Studies has doubled in four years.

In 1970, only 16 percent of our students were enrolled in General Studies. In the Fall of 1974, 34 percent were in this program. Gains were also great in Nursing (up 7%). Proportional enrollment dropped most in Teacher Education (down 10%) followed by Arts and Science, Engineering, and Special

Students. The decline in the proportion of Special Students (down 2%) was met by an increase in students in Associate Degree programs (up3%).

10. Credit load: there has been a significant reduction in the average course load.

During the Fall, 1970 semester, the average course load was 9.9 credits. In 1973, this figure was 8.8 credits. The change in the distribution of credits is statistically significant. There is less than one possibility in 1000 that these changes are due to chance. In spite of the drop in average credit load of all students, the average credits carried by full-time and part-time students has remained fairly constant (15 FT and 5 PT). There are simply more part-time students.

11. Grades: the average Quality Point Index has increased slightly during the past six years.

Students compiled an average Quality Point Index (QPI) of 1.95 in Fall, 1968. (4.0 is the highest possible). In Fall, 1973, the average QPI was 2.1. The average QPI is typically higher in the Spring than during the Fall term.

12. Noncredit enrollment: students in noncredit courses increased seven times faster than enrollment in credit courses during the past eight years.

During the entire 1965-1966 academic year, 513 students were enrolled in noncredit courses. However in 1973-1974, enrollment in these programs was 8482. During the past three years, the pace of this increase has slowed.

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